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Washington, DC 20529



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

PUBLIC COPY

[Handwritten signature]

[Redacted]

JUN 18 2004

FILE:

[Redacted]

Office: VERMONT SERVICE CENTER

Date:

IN RE:

Petitioner:

Beneficiary

[Redacted]

PETITION:

Immigrant petition for Alien Worker as a Skilled Worker or Professional pursuant to section 203(b)(3) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1153(b)(3)

ON BEHALF OF PETITIONER:

[Redacted]

INSTRUCTIONS:

This is the decision of the Administrative Appeals Office in your case. All documents have been returned to the office that originally decided your case. Any further inquiry must be made to that office.

[Handwritten signature]
for

Robert P. Wiemann, Director
Administrative Appeals Office

DISCUSSION: The preference visa petition was denied by the Director, Vermont Service Center, and is now before the Administrative Appeals Office (AAO) on appeal. The appeal will be dismissed.

The petitioner is a hair salon. It seeks to employ the beneficiary permanently in the United States as a hair stylist and manager. As required by statute, a Form ETA 750, Application for Alien Employment Certification approved by the Department of Labor, accompanied the petition. The director determined that the petitioner had not established that it had the continuing ability to pay the beneficiary the proffered wage beginning on the priority date of the visa petition and denied the petition accordingly.

On appeal, counsel submits a statement and additional evidence.

Section 203(b)(3)(A)(i) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (the Act), 8 U.S.C. § 1153(b)(3)(A)(i), provides for the granting of preference classification to qualified immigrants who are capable, at the time of petitioning for classification under this paragraph, of performing skilled labor (requiring at least two years training or experience), not of a temporary nature, for which qualified workers are not available in the United States.

The regulation at 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(g)(2) states, in pertinent part:

Ability of prospective employer to pay wage. Any petition filed by or for an employment-based immigrant which requires an offer of employment must be accompanied by evidence that the prospective United States employer has the ability to pay the proffered wage. The petitioner must demonstrate this ability at the time the priority date is established and continuing until the beneficiary obtains lawful permanent residence. Evidence of this ability shall be in the form of copies of annual reports, federal tax returns, or audited financial statements.

The petitioner must demonstrate the continuing ability to pay the proffered wage beginning on the priority date, the day the Form ETA 750 was accepted for processing by any office within the employment system of the Department of Labor. See 8 CFR § 204.5(d). Here, the Form ETA 750 was accepted for processing on May 3, 2001. The proffered wage as stated on the Form ETA 750 is \$10.00 per hour, which amounts to \$19,760 annually based on a thirty-eight (38) hour week.

With the petition, the petitioner submitted no evidence of its ability to pay the proffered wage.

Because the evidence submitted was insufficient to demonstrate the petitioner's continuing ability to pay the proffered wage beginning on the priority date, on November 2, 2002, the director requested additional evidence pertinent to that ability. In accordance with 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(g)(2), the director specifically requested that the petitioner provide copies of annual reports, federal tax returns, or audited financial statements to demonstrate its continuing ability to pay the proffered wage beginning on the priority date. The director's request for evidence included the following:

Will the prospective employee fill a newly created position? ____ If your answer is no, how long has this position existed? _____. What wage have you been paying the incumbent to this position? \$ ____ /year. Identify the former employee, submit evidence of the salary paid to him or her, and document that the position was vacated. Submit copies of Form 941 for the period in question.

In response, the petitioner submitted the petitioner's Form 1120S U.S. Income Tax Return for an S Corporation for the year 2001. The tax return reflects the following information:

	<u>2001</u>
Ordinary income	\$1,551
Current Assets	\$823
Current Liabilities	\$0
Net Current Assets	\$823

In addition, counsel submitted a letter which states the following: "Please note that the company paid out salaries in the amount of \$50,000 for the year of 2001 and [the] company is replacing another worker with the same salary."

The director determined that the evidence submitted did not establish that the petitioner had the continuing ability to pay the proffered wage beginning on the priority date, and, on April 30, 2003, denied the petition. The director stated the following in his decision:

On November 2, 2002 you were requested to submit evidence to establish that the employer had the ability to pay the proffered salary as of the date of filing. If the beneficiary would be replacing another worker, you were instructed to identify the former employee, submit evidence of the salary paid to him or her, and document that the position was vacated. In response, you submitted the 2001 U.S. Income Tax Return for an S corporation showing \$1,551 net income and \$823 net current assets. Both net income and net current assets are less than the offered salary. Although the attorney of record states the company is replacing another worker with the same salary, the employee was not named and no evidence of the salary paid to him or her was provided.

On appeal, counsel asserts the following:

Please be advised that the petitioner has sufficient funds to pay the offered salary as he will be replacing Mrs. [REDACTED] (see W-2's) and will also work in place of [REDACTED] who is reducing her hours. As such, the company has sufficient funds to pay the salary of \$10/hr.

Counsel submits Forms W-2 Wage and Tax Statements for [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] for 2002 evidencing wages paid by the petitioner in the amount of \$16,070 to [REDACTED] and \$27,000 to Mr. [REDACTED] and wages paid by the petitioner in two different locations totaling \$27,564 for wages paid to Ms. [REDACTED]

The regulations affirmatively require a petitioner to establish eligibility for the benefit it is seeking at the time the petition is filed. See 8 C.F.R. § 103.2(b)(12). The purpose of the request for evidence is to elicit further information that clarifies whether eligibility for the benefit sought has been established. 8 C.F.R. § 103.2(b)(8).

The petitioner was put on notice of required evidence and given a reasonable opportunity to provide it for the record before the visa petition was adjudicated. The petitioner failed to submit the requested evidence and now submits it on

appeal. However, the AAO will not consider this evidence for any purpose. *Matter of Soriano*, 19 I&N Dec. 764 (BIA 1988). The appeal will be adjudicated based on the record of proceeding before the director.

Even if the additional evidence were considered, however, the petitioner did not submit evidence, such as a statement, that it would be replacing a former employee with the beneficiary. Handwritten onto the director's request for evidence is a negative response to the question concerning whether the position is new. Thus, although the author of the handwritten response is unknown, there is a response that the position is not new. Additionally, "\$20,000" is the handwritten response to the question concerning how much the incumbent to the position has been paid. Aside from those handwritten notes without claimed authorship, the only other statement concerning the petitioner's purported intentions to replace an employee with the beneficiary, is the attorney's brief statement in a letter accompanying the appeal.¹ However, without documentary evidence to support the claim, the assertions of counsel will not satisfy the petitioner's burden of proof. *Matter of Obaigbena*, 19 I&N Dec. 533, 534 (BIA 1988); *Matter of Ramirez-Sanchez*, 17 I&N Dec. 503, 506 (BIA 1980).

In determining the petitioner's ability to pay the proffered wage during a given period, Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS) will first examine whether the petitioner employed and paid the beneficiary during that period. If the petitioner establishes by documentary evidence that it employed the beneficiary at a salary equal to or greater than the proffered wage, the evidence will be considered *prima facie* proof of the petitioner's ability to pay the proffered wage. In the instant case, the petitioner did not establish that it employed and paid the beneficiary the full proffered wage in 2001.

If the petitioner does not establish that it employed and paid the beneficiary an amount at least equal to the proffered wage during that period, CIS will next examine the net income figure reflected on the petitioner's federal income tax return, without consideration of depreciation or other expenses. Reliance on federal income tax returns as a basis for determining a petitioner's ability to pay the proffered wage is well established by judicial precedent. *Elatos Restaurant Corp. v. Sava*, 632 F. Supp. 1049, 1054 (S.D.N.Y. 1986) (citing *Tongatapu Woodcraft Hawaii, Ltd. v. Feldman*, 736 F.2d 1305 (9th Cir. 1984); see also *Chi-Feng Chang v. Thornburgh*, 719 F. Supp. 532 (N.D. Texas 1989); *K.C.P. Food Co., Inc. v. Sava*, 623 F. Supp. 1080 (S.D.N.Y. 1985); *Ubeda v. Palmer*, 539 F. Supp. 647 (N.D. Ill. 1982), *aff'd*, 703 F.2d 571 (7th Cir. 1983).

If the net income the petitioner demonstrates it had available during that period, if any, added to the wages paid to the beneficiary during the period, if any, do not equal the amount of the proffered wage or more, CIS will review the petitioner's assets. The petitioner's total assets include depreciable assets that the petitioner uses in its business. Those depreciable assets will not be converted to cash during the ordinary course of business and will not, therefore, become funds available to pay the proffered wage. Further, the petitioner's total assets must be balanced by the petitioner's liabilities. Otherwise, they cannot properly be considered in the determination of the petitioner's ability to pay the proffered wage. Rather, CIS will consider *net current assets* as an alternative method of demonstrating the ability to pay the proffered wage.

Net current assets are the difference between the petitioner's current assets and current liabilities.² A corporation's year-end current assets are shown on Schedule L, lines 1 through 6. Its year-end current liabilities are shown on lines

¹ The AAO concurs with the director's determination that the statement provided in response to the director's request for evidence is not dispositive on this point.

² According to *Barron's Dictionary of Accounting Terms* 117 (3rd ed. 2000), "current assets" consist of items

16 through 18. If a corporation's end-of-year net current assets are equal to or greater than the proffered wage, the petitioner is expected to be able to pay the proffered wage out of those net current assets. The petitioner's net current assets during the year in question, 2001, however, were only \$823.

The petitioner has not demonstrated that it paid any wages to the beneficiary during 2001. In 2001, the petitioner shows a net (ordinary) income of only \$1,551, net current assets of only \$823 and has not, therefore, demonstrated the ability to pay the proffered wage out of its net income or net current assets. The petitioner has not demonstrated that any other funds were available to pay the proffered wage. The petitioner has not, therefore, shown the ability to pay the proffered wage during 2001.

The petitioner failed to submit evidence sufficient to demonstrate that it had the ability to pay the proffered wage during 2001. Therefore, the petitioner has not established that it had the continuing ability to pay the proffered wage beginning on the priority date.

The burden of proof in these proceedings rests solely with the petitioner. Section 291 of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1361. The petitioner has not met that burden.

ORDER: The appeal is dismissed.

having (in most cases) a life of one year or less, such as cash, marketable securities, inventory and prepaid expenses. "Current liabilities" are obligations payable (in most cases) within one year, such accounts payable, short-term notes payable, and accrued expenses (such as taxes and salaries). *Id.* at 118.